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Postgraduate podcasting: An innovative approach to assessment

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and

Dr. Fiona Robson



Overview of presentation

- What is innovative assessment?
- Rationale for project
- Research methods
- Findings
- Reflections on using technology-based assessments
- Conclusions and implications for practice



Innovative assessment

Aims to produce students who are:

- Highly motivated and committed
- Enterprising
- Equipped with a range of transferable skills
- Capable of self-criticism and evaluation
- Active and reactive participants in the learning process

Source: Mowl (1996:5)



The quest for innovative assessment

- Podcasts offer the following advantages:
 - Respond to students' expectations that we will utilise the latest technology
 - Provides a range of transferable skills
 - Technical skills
 - Organisational skills
 - Working as a team
 - Interpreting research to create scripts
 - Moves beyond 'Death by PowerPoint'
 - *the ability to add clarity and meaning, motivation, emotion...* (Gribbins, 2007:1)

Research methods

- Working with part-time students on MA HRM&D
 - Content analysis of reflective statements submitted as other half of the summative assessment
 - Self-completion questionnaires completed online by students

Key findings

Five themes were identified from the reflective statements:

1. Prior attitudes about the use of podcasting
2. Developing podcasting skills
3. Benefits of podcasting
4. Transferable skills
5. Future use of podcasting



Key findings

Prior attitudes

- Many of the students were anxious due to a lack of understanding of what podcasts were (fear of the unknown)

Developing podcasting skills

- The opportunity to develop these skills was identified by a number of students.



Key findings

Benefits of podcasting

- Combining technology with studies in a meaningful way
- Forced all members of the group to really learn the subject area (so they could speak authoritatively)
- Learning how to facilitate formal group discussions
- Broadened the experience gained from the programme

Key findings

Benefits (continued)

- Learning technical skills
- A quick and effective way of summarising information
- Learning how to write scripts
- Focus on being 'engaging' presenters
- Different from all of the other assessment methods used on the programme

Key findings

Development of transferable skills

- Enhanced team work and communication skills
- Knowledge about the topic chosen as the subject of the podcast
- Using finished podcasts as a means of sharing information in organisations
- Creative thinking
- Listening

Development of transferable skills

- Negotiating
- Time management
- Discovering better ways to find information on the internet
- Losing fear of technology – exploring it first before becoming daunted
- The ability to present ideas clearly and succinctly

Key findings

Future use of podcasting

- Whilst only a few could give examples of how it could be used in their current role, several considered how it could be used in the future:
 - Deliver elements of Corporate Induction
 - As part of the diversity strategy to communicate with hard to reach groups
 - To provide consistency in training delivery



Challenges of technology-based assessments

- Student apprehension
- Gaining the buy-in of teaching team
- Time implications for part-time students
- Writing clear assessment briefs
- Equipment availability
- Students' lack of technical skills (or perceived skills)
- Carefully defining assessment criteria
- Something different....



Conclusions

- There are clear advantages of using podcasts for students – both in the present and the future
- A wide range of transferable skills can be gained
- Successful podcast assessment requires:
 - A very clear assessment brief
 - Clear marking criteria
 - Technical support
 - Examples for students to listen to

Implications for teaching practice

- Discuss perceived problems (and subsequent reflections) with future students
- Check progress on an ongoing basis
- Share examples of podcasts from past cohorts with students to reduce anxiety
- Encourage self reflections
- Consider when podcasting is (and is not appropriate)
- Request student feedback on the process

